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Dionne, Patrick

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California

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U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Michael Ehrlich

CHDS Hosts Annual Alumni Professional Exchange

By MC2 Michael Ehrlich

NPS' Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) hosts their annual Alumni Professional Exchange (APEX) in Herrmann Hall, Feb. 21. The two-day workshop provides CHDS alumni with an opportunity to share best practices and understand diverse perspectives on a number of critical homeland security issues.

"This is a great event where about 10 percent of our alumni come back to attend this educational experience," said CHDS Director Glen Woodbury. "It's not so much an alumni conference, but rather a continuing education [event]. People get to continue the conversations they had in the classroom, using the knowledge they have gained at NPS to advance their critical thinking even further."

APEX featured several guest lecturers offering insights on myriad domestic security issues, such as the opioid crisis, artificial intelligence, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, fake news and its impact on decision-makers, and the lessons learned from hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"We have all of these local, state and federal employees looking at disasters, man-made and natural, and how important it is to not just look at today but to look forward into the next 10 to 15 years," said CHDS Strategic Communications Director Heather Issvoran. "We have about 1,200 alumni, about 200 attending today. Alumni are here who graduated 15 years ago, and some from just last quarter. It's in their personal and professional interest to network and collaborate across their classes."

For NPS to accomplish its unique mission, the university must exist as a joint, interagency environment, and CHDS is an excellent example of that. Sponsored by the National Preparedness Directorate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the center conducts a wide range of programs focused on assisting current and emerging leaders in homeland security to develop the policies, strategies, programs and organizational elements needed to defeat terrorism and prepare for, and respond to, natural disasters and public safety threats across the United States.

“Seventy-five percent [of these alumni] are state and local firefighters, police officers, emergency responders, public health officials, FBI and NCIS,” noted Woodbury. “All of these folks are part of this conference, and it [enriches] our current CHDS curriculum because of these conversations with alumni from so many different fields of expertise.”

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